

ART AND THE CITY

by JIM MAGNER



Artist Profile

Ann Crain



"Lady Awaiting" – 30" x 40", Oil on canvas

Ann Crain uses the personal powers of color to create a mood and to begin the risky adventure of asking questions and searching for answers. She does not do this alone, you have to supply some of your own solutions to life's basic riddles. The clues lie in the essence of something: the slip of a memory or the smile of a sensation hazily relived. Her work, "Carces Laundry," may be a village in Provence and other places immediately... places you passed through or lived for a while one summer while in college. Or "Lady Awaiting" could be you or someone you know...locked in a moment of existence, happy, or perhaps not. Even when there is no subject in the painting, as in an abstract like "Into the Mystic," there is a place among the drifting mix of color and texture where thoughts and visual memories congregate.

It is as if Ann Crain's brush passes through her life-long home on Virginia's eastern shore on its way to the paper or canvas. Maybe it picks up some of the breeze off the bay, the cobalt cools of the deep water, the drifting white specks of the sails or the crimson warmth of a setting sun and sets them down in Italy or Belize or Stockholm, blending with the color and character of that place.

The foundation is acrylic paint on paper, canvas or panel. Sometimes fabrics, papers or bits and pieces of stuff are added to create the "mixed media" depth, dimensions and textures. Ann's final intent is to create a reflection of you, to get you to look inside at your own emotions and the color rhythms that stir them.

Ann's recent work can be found at the Alvear Studio on Capitol Hill at 705 8th St., SE, and at galleries in New York and throughout the region. www.anncrainart.com ann@anncrainart.com.

Jim Magner's Thoughts on Art

In conjunction with the Paul Klee retrospective at The Phillips Collection is an exhibit of the drawings and paintings of children—mostly preteens—including children from the Washington area. Also included are a few childhood drawings by Klee and Pablo Picasso, which are hung next to mature works of both artists.

Of central interest is the human compulsion to create from an early age and how the distractions of everyday life affect those impulses as we get older. Curator and author, Jonathan Fineburg, poses some critical questions: What does it mean to be artistically gifted? What is the relationship of drawing to creative thinking?

The most creative art belongs to the youngest tots, happily whipped up before they start fretting about impressing people with skill. By the time they age up to double digits, those still drawing are more consumed with rendering—laboriously making things look "real." And indeed, that is how they are judged. We usually define artistic talent as being able to reproduce something realistically—the craft of optical illusion.

Why are we so impressed by rendering and not by imagination? Because it is harder to evaluate? After all, what criteria do you use to judge things that are really different, or thinking that is really new? We used to try at least, but in this No Child Left Behind academic world we are sailing in the opposite direction. If it can't be easily quantified, or lend itself to a multiple-choice format, it is soon dismissed. And you know what that means in terms of budgets.

As a teacher, I encouraged my students to not go through life merely answering the questions. Question the questions. Therein genius lies.

At the Museums

Klee and America The Phillips Collection 1600 21st St.

www.phillipscollection.org

Walking through most retrospectives is like taking a holiday in an artist's eye. With Paul Klee, it is journey through the artist's fantastic brain. It is said that no one Klee looks like any other Klee. That's because each work is an exquisite balancing act of color, line, form and nuance. Each precise composition has its own meaning that reaches beyond the style or technique employed—each has a problem to be solved and each has a secret to share...but not completely. You have to look for clues in the Klee magic-act through his vision, influences, and ideas.

Klee and America is a collection of 80 drawings, watercolors, and oil paintings drawn from public and private collections throughout the US.

They are exhibited chronologically, so it is relatively easy to keep track of this analytical- and supremely confident-man who always had a place in the engine of the bullet train of radical art movements that blasted its way through early 20th Century Europe: Blue Rider; Dada; Cubism; Bauhaus, Surrealism and others. Most of his phases are represented here.

Klee's work and influence came to this country rather late in his career, in the 20's, and he didn't really consider America as a market until the Nazi's came to power and banned his work. Duncan Phillips understood that Klee was beginning to have a dynamic effect on American art when he bought his first Klees in 1930. It is that continuing vision at the Phillips Collection that brings this expansive collection, many never before seen, to Washington. Through Sept. 10.

National Gallery of Art Constitution between 3rd and 7th Sts., NW www.nga.gov

Through Sept. 17: "Bellini, Giorgione and Titian" brings you over 50 glorious paintings from the Renaissance of Venice to simply ogle. Or, there is much to learn about the introduction of pastoral landscapes and what modern conservation science has discovered about the techniques of the masters. (Review coming in the August column.)

Hirshhorn 7th and Independence Ave., SW www.hirshhorn.si.edu

Through Sept. 10: "Anselm Kiefer:



Paul Klee (1879-1940)
"Youth Actor's Mask"—
4 1/2" x 13 3/8", Oil on canvas



"Carcas Laundry" — 8"x12", Oil on paper

Heaven and Earth." These 50 major paintings explore the mysteries of the universe and the very nature of the heavens. The Hirshhorn is also offering an extensive series of "Art Nights" throughout July that include music, "Jazz on the Plaza," on Thursdays, 5:30 - 8, along with tours and related events at 7p.m. Fridays at the Hirshhorn feature the "Artist on Artist" series of discussions and tours. 202.633.1000

Corcoran Gallery of Art 500 17th St., NW www.corcoran.org

Through July 9: "Botanical Treasures of Lewis and Clark." There is still time to see the more than 60 works of art-including graphite drawings, watercolors, oil paintings, sculpture, jewelry, quilts-created by artists associated with the Corcoran's Botanical Certificate program especially for the show. Based on direct observations of plants collected or described by the explorers, the works represent a contemporary perspective on American botanical art.

Through Aug. 6: "National Student Art Exhibition of 2006." Of the 12 young artists nationwide to receive top honors from The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards program, three are from the greater Washington region. This show features 344 artworks representing 14 visual arts categories. These are the final selections from the more than 250,000 works of art and writing received from students in grades 7-12 each year.

Gallery Openings

Ann Loeb Bronfman Gallery Jewish Community Center 1529 16th St., NW www.djcc.org

July 6-Aug. 13: The Social Realism photography of Godfrey Frankel and Helen Levitt takes you back to the way it was in the 1940s -not romanticized, but not degrading either. Children have dignity if not possessions and celebrate the pure joy of being young and alive.

"Through their Eyes: Captured Moments of Childhood," will be on view through August 13.

An opening artists' reception will be held at the Gallery on July 6 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The event is free and open to the public. A children's art reception will be on July 20 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Contact: 202.518.9400.

Hemphill Fine Arts 1515 14th St., NW www.hemphillfinearts.com

Through Aug. 19: The Hemphill summer show is: William Christenberry, 35mm Kodachrome; Don Donaghy, Photographs from 1961 - 1969; and Benjamin Abramowitz, Works on Paper 1955 - 1965.

Conner Contemporary 1730 Connecticut Ave., NW 2nd fl. www.connercontemporary.com

Through July 29: Bradley McCallum and Jacqueline Terry. New video and photography.

Irvine Contemporary Art 1412 14th St., NW www.irvinecontemporary.com

Through July 23: "Animalia." This is a group show featuring new work by artists focusing on animals to explore self-identity, sexuality, religion and culture through paintings, photographs, sculpture, video and installations. Over 15 local and international artists.



From "Animalia"

Zenith Gallery 413 7th St., NW www.zenithgallery.com

Through July 16: "Our Town." Seven established gallery artists with paintings and photography centered on the Wash-

ington Area. Also on display are several of the extraordinary portraits by Washington painter Bradley Stevens. His portrait of Vernon Jordan was recently accepted into the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery.



Bradley Stevens, "Portrait of Vernon Jordan"

Touchstone Gallery 406 7th St., NW www.touchstonegallery.com

Through July 9: "As you like it." Paintings by Nancy Novick and Jan Sherfy "Parallels and Other Marks." Paintings by Luci and Dick Herrman are in the Annex. Beginning July 12 is the "Bin Binge" wherein members of the gallery offer a variety of artworks at discounted prices.

Marsha Mateyka Gallery 2012 R St., NW www.marshamateykgallery.com

Through July 8: "Rome Series." Abstract paintings by internationally known Kitty Klaidman.

Foundry Gallery 1314 18th St., NW www.foundrygallery.org

July 5-July 30: "After the Storm." Artists from Hancock Co. MS who survived Katrina are featured in this juried show of two and three-dimensional works. The county took a direct hit from the storm, and almost all artist galleries and homes were destroyed.

Gallery Plan b 1530 14th St., NW www.galleryplanb.com

Through July 8: Gallery Plan b features ten area artists who apply virtually every printmaking technique in a wide range of applications and subjects. This is a great opportunity to see a mix of printmaking methods and some very accomplished art.

Project 4 903 U St., NW www.project4gallery.com

Through July 22: New gallery Project 4 continues "Kuroi Shiroi," (Black/White) an installation of black stoneware and white porcelain by Washington artist, Laurel Lukaszewski. Influenced by her time in Japan, her work is based on the study of Japanese mandalas.

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